



March 29, 2003



Breakfast with Congresswoman Baldwin

By Jeff Bollier
Daily News staff writer

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin doesn't see meaningful health care reform coming before the federal government for several years.

Baldwin, D-Madison, discussed health care reforms and funding requests during the Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce's monthly Legislative Breakfast at the Ramada Inn of Greater Beloit Friday morning.

"I see things getting worse before they get better, but that problem will create momentum for meaningful change," Baldwin said. "The clamor for health care changes will be so deafening it's all we (Congressional representatives) will hear when we return to our districts."

Baldwin said she plans to reintroduce legislation to develop federal//state partnerships for health insurance plans.

"I'm pushing health care reforms forward today by urging states to develop plans and support their plans with federal assistance," she said. "The proposal will let us see what's working and what's not and allow us to begin moving forward."

She said Gov. Jim Doyle's plan to help balance the state budget with additional intergovernmental transfer funds probably will not be successful, but it's not the only way the state was hoping to get additional health care funds from the federal government.

"The state's been looking for other ways to take its claims to the federal government," Baldwin said. "They've made several proposals that could bring them back up to the same levels of funding they're used to. The state is not putting all their eggs in one basket."

Baldwin said the health care crisis has reached larger proportions than in 1992. She said about 41 million people are uninsured currently and health care premiums are increasing faster than inflation.

Locally, Baldwin said she met with Congressman Don Manzullo, R-Egan, Ill., to discuss supporting each other on projects that will benefit the

Stateline Area.

“This community straddles the state line and we can be working on projects that can benefit both sides,” she said. “We spend too much energy and time competing instead of finding ways we can work together.”

Baldwin said she hopes she, Manzullo and Congressman Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, can begin looking at the Rock River Valley as a region.

“When we start looking at our combined assets, it becomes a region which people will want to live in,” she said. “I’m hopeful these discussions will bear fruit.”

Baldwin said she hoped to provide a strong federal presence for the region as development plans come to fruition.

“As you develop a plan to enhance your basic assets in the area, we’ll work with you on that plan to create a federal partnership to go along with your local partnership,” Baldwin said.

She also said while she opposed the build-up to war in Iraq, she now stands firmly behind the nation’s military personnel in the Middle East.

“I voted no ... because after our greatest generation took part in World War II, they created an alternative means to resolve conflicts,” Baldwin said. “That failed, but at this point in time we stand in solidarity, praying for our troops’ swift and safe return.”

Baldwin also voted in support of legislation enacting the nationwide Amber Alert system that Congress approved earlier this week by a vote of 410-14.

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